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AND
OTHER POEMS

BY

GASCOIGNE MACKIE

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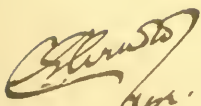

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CHARMIDES

AND

OTHER POEMS

CHIEFLY RELATING TO OXFORD

BY

GASCOIGNE MACKIE

AUTHOR OF

THE MAN OF KERIOTH, ANDREA AND OTHER POEMS,

ETC.

Oxford

B. H. BLACKWELL, BROAD STREET

London

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1912.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

CHARMIDES, *published by Mr. Blackwell in* 1898, *has been revised, and in part re-written. The section entitled "Oxford" was first printed in* The Spectator *in* 1897. *I have also to acknowledge permission to reprint "Oxford at Night" from the same paper. Four sections from Charmides, two Sonnets and "Wadham Garden" have appeared in Mr. J. B. Firth's "Minstrelsy of Isis,"* (1908), *and five sections from Charmides and one Sonnet in Professor William Knight's "Glamour of Oxford."*

918012

CHARMIDES.

TO

ARTHUR R. BAYLEY.

My Dear Friend,

I have never yet treated myself to the luxury of a preface: but, as we grow older, we get more talkative, and have a tendency to spread ourselves in a more genial and personal way.

Poets may be said to dwell in the shadow which coming events cast before them; and I anticipate that the indifference which has been for so long time a marked feature of the age in respect to contemporary poetry will be mitigated, and we may now look forward perhaps to a more generous —or at least, a less perfunctory treatment at the hands of those whose office it is to mediate between the writer and his readers. Should it prove otherwise, I can say, with a certain other "harmless drudge," that "having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less"——

Charmides owes its existence to the late John Addington Symonds, who on the strength of my earliest book of verse, twenty years ago, assured me that I was 'dear to the Muses,' and especially picked out for approbation, amid much that was "crude and young and yeasty," a piece called "An Invocation." It was his generous appreciation which encouraged me "to look again upon the things we love," and to sing with greater confidence of boyhood's friendship and of those school days spent at Oxford which had left so ineffaceable an impression on my memory. With this plain explanation before him, the wayfaring man, though critic, will, I trust, no longer err by alluding to Charmides as 'a college friend.'

There is not a word in this book about my college friends or my college days. I have almost forgotten my college days, and my college friends have forgotten me. Lest this should savour of bitterness, I will here most gratefully acknowledge that the Head of the College where I was an undergraduate has been the kindest of critics and the most steadfast of personal friends to me for more than twenty-five years.

The Professor of Poetry at Oxford—himself a

poet—(Bristol has had many poets, but has kept none)—in his inaugural address in the Sheldonian Theatre, among other interesting and varied matters, said, "If you want before all to be a poet, if that is your first object, don't stay at Oxford." This remark, true in itself, is especially applicable to one who ventures to make Oxford the subject of his verse. For indeed, treading the streets of Oxford, I usually feel so overwhelmed by my own insignificance and unworthiness, that only the more plangent utterances of Job, or the words of the Patriarch in the presence of Pharoah could at all adequately express my emotions. Charmides was written in Germany, France, South Africa, on the high seas—almost anywhere, in fact, except in Oxford. It has been revised in this edition, and in part rewritten; and perhaps you will miss something in its present form of that which pleased you when you first read it fourteen years ago.

There is a famous saying that when a true friend is found one should grapple him with hooks of steel; and as it was this poem which made us friends, so to-day it seems to me inevitable that your name should be inscribed at its beginning; for indeed, I have no wish to be remembered if my friends

are forgotten. We have made a pilgrimage together. You know who Charmides was; you have stood by his grave; you are intimate with the associations the customs and the localities of which these verses are a record — and through you I cherish the not unnatural hope that there will continue to be a few in every generation who will hold these buds of song above the stream of oblivion.

Your sincere friend,

GASCOIGNE MACKIE.

Hordle, Hants,
Xmas, 1911.

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PROEM.

TO THE EVENING THRUSH.

Rapt Orpheus of the green and glimmering ways
Hidden amid the flowering chestnut-trees,
Thou singest to my heart of other days!
Deep in the crimson-hued Hesperides
Vesper now lifts her lamp to evening prayer;
And o'er the fields of memory, like a dream,
Through the still twilight and the scented air
Rings the sweet prelude of thy song supreme.

Ah, look not back; Eurydice was lost
To Orpheus thus, and vain was any skill:
Yet, through thy passionate voice I hear the ghost
Of Hellas singing on the haunted hill:
And, gazing backward down that dark ascent
Memory embraces but a melting shade:
For never twice the awful Powers relent,
E'en though an Orpheus should invoke their aid.

For ever throned amid the falling bloom!
Still in my heart and high above all pain,
Like some brave banner in the minster gloom
I'll hang the votive offering of thy strain:—
Still, amid chestnut-boughs, when soft winds blow
Their efflorescent wreaths like censers swinging;
Vesper shall glimmer through the crimson glow,
And thou shalt sing, as now I hear thee singing.

PART I.

I. *OLD MAGDALEN BRIDGE.*

HERE from the bridge where cloister'd gardens old
Are spread beneath us, and the frequent bells
Chime the division of our parcell'd day,
Behold the city of the still grey towers!
It is a sacred spot.
The fragrant air
Is stirring with the lisp of summer leaves,
Lilac and linden and laburnum leaves,
And the low murmur of the meeting streams
Rippling under the arch: and, all around,
Within the shadow of her antique walls
Youth passes like an unabiding stream.

Perchance her syren-sister of the fens
Hath sent forth greater singers to the world,
While we in silent reverence bow the head:—
For how can lips of dust thy praise proclaim,
Mother immortal of too mortal men?

II. *IFFLEY.*

THERE is a plot of land that lies a league
Beyond this bridge, whither my thoughtful steps
Have often turned: up the strait straggling hamlet
And past the shatter'd elm, I reach the gate:
Here reigns the giant yew-tree as of yore,
And eastward underneath an iron cross
The dust of dearest Charmides is layed.
Silent I stand and gaze. The sombre dome
Hangs like a ponderous catafalque, and all
That lies beneath seems to my troubled brain
One huge sarcophagus: and human song
As witless as the twittering of the swallows
That gather in the dumb September sky.

The swallow mourns not o'er her empty nest,
But trusts her wings: and since the change must come,
O, why should mortals mourn their home of clay?

III. *APRIL.*

Softer than April shower on opening leaves,
From the big cloud of doubt that dulled my brain
The quickening drops of gentle transport fall,
Reviving hopes that drooped: Dear Charmides,
Spring brings the cuckoo, thee it brings not back,
Only the pang of ineffectual grief.

A strain of music at the close of day
I cannot hear but I remember thee:
When the full sequence of harmonious waves
Gluts the enchanted hollow of mine ear,
Then too thou comest, on the throbbing tide
Of music, borne from strange and distant shores,
To comfort and to charm me as of old.
Like Israfel, on wings of melody
Thou speedest from the regions of thy rest,
To comfort and to charm me as of old.

IV. *THE POWER OF MUSIC.*

Ah, did not music build the walls of Heaven
And bid the whirling atoms of white mist
Fall into shape, and fuse to forms of Beauty?
Did not the spell of Love's enchanting lyre
Thrilling the uttermost uncouth abyss
Compel obedience, till the firmament
Was framed, and distant dim stupendous stars
Sang of Creation, while the Sons of God
Standing amazed beheld the Mazzaroth
Coast into splendour with a shout of joy?

E'en so thy being, immortal Charmides,
Seem'd ever swayed by that majestic rhythm;
And thy proud spirit, beneath a spell of fire,
E'en through the poise and counterpoise of passions
Rebelliously constrained, I watched with awe
Unfolding, still unconscious of its power.

V. *UT PASTOR.*

Or shall I, like poor Colin on a hill,
Pipe a sad ditty to the heedless flock?
Or, seated on some solitary spur
Flute sweetly to the blue unlistening sky,
Telling dead things a tale of deathless love,
Lost in my song, still dreaming he were near?—
Ah, what abides but heavenly charity?—

Swift as the rivulet singing to the sea,
Yet guided by celestial influence
And gathering impulse as it onward rolls,
The spring-tide of my song's impetuous flood
Shall beat and burst the barriers of the heart:
Until, in other ears and other days,
And to the breast of beauty yet unborn
The murmurs of my melody shall ring
Like echoes from the Islands of the Blest.

VI. *PROVIDENCE.*

Look back, and scrutinize the web of life;
Study the knitted texture and confess
How every stitch was counted, every turn
Deliberately contrived; and though unseen,
The cunning needles made the ends converge
To fit some object:—something was in view,
Some secret half-concealed and half-expressed,
Some purpose undivulged, but yet enough
To inspire the heart.
When I was yet a child,
A mighty Spirit stood beside my bed
And in her hand she held a silver shield;
'Behold,' she cried. I look'd and wondering saw
As in a mirror, darkly, my own face
Aged and calm, and round my brows a wreath
Of laurel leaves: "Only have faith," she frowned,
"Labour in faith, and all shall be fulfilled."

VII. *LIFE'S OXYMORON.*

But what to me is an immortal crown,
Or boyish dream fulfilled?—A wider joy
Invigorates my soul: I have seen enough
To know that he who strives with Death is blest:—
The baffled patience of a poet's heart
Builds for eternity, and he who fights
With self is born a king beyond the grave:
But heaven's best boon is humour that can gaze
Fearlessly round, feeling how infinite Love
Enfolds us all so softly in His arms
That man can smile e'en in the face of death:—
So would I whisper to the yet unborn
Some fragment of the secret I have learnt,
And from the discipline of long defeat
Affirm:—the pith if not the prize of life
Is ours who, striving, never quite achieve.

VIII. *NEL MEZZO DEL CAMMIN DI NOSTRA VITA.*

Who can remould the perished dews of time
Or trace the trembling ardours of the dawn?
Who can call back the morning-star of love?
Or, from youth's lattice leaning, breathe again
Th' authentic exultation of the prime?

Pausing midway upon the path of life
I feel as one who inly is resolved
To rest no more on any human heart:
And lesson'd in the school of lonely song,
Another stay is mine: yet memory,
Like summer lightning, playing on the past,
Pictures again that morning when I first
Beheld these towers, and stood upon this bridge,
Holding my father's hand: for, even then,
The lot was cast, and I, a child of nine,
Was called henceforth to serve the muse of song.

IX. *THE DOOR.*

O MOMENT of unutterable distress
Then, when my father kissed me, and I clung
To him, saying farewell upon the step
Where the dark hatchment frowned with lilies adorned
Above our heads ; awaiting on the threshold
While the bright bell re-echo'd, ere the door
Swung open silently :—and he went home.
O unrecorded nights of childhood's tears
When the faint image of a mother dead
Seemed to be near, and comfort me unseen !

Though naked to the rack of life we move,
We move not unattended. There are those
Who watch and weigh, and will in turn exact
Righteous requital. For myself, I vow,
Had I as many sons as Hecuba,
Not one should serve th' apprenticeship I served !

X. *TRIVIUM.*

Scant patience have I to expatiate
Upon the harsh scholastic pedantry
Preposterous, to which I was enthralled:
Dry sentences that praised Philosophy
And Wisdom formed my bitter tale of bricks:
To learn me Greek I conned a grammar-book
Written in Latin—even the title-page!
As though man's path had not enough of thorns,
Mine was the serpent's curse—to feed on dust:
And so, like Virgil, but without a guide,
Ibam obscurus in the shades of hell,
Where rigour was not lacking, nor the wail
Of wretchedness, and fear in many a form:
'*God is my light*'—O city tenebrous,
God is thy light!—Why then with works of darkness
Wert thou about my path, about my bed?

XI. *HOME SICKNESS.*

THE first slow hours of our return to school
Two of us sauntered slowly, sick at heart,
Down the Broad Walk: and as we went, we heard
The whistle and the clank of shunting trucks
Far off: and "Oh," he wailed, "I wish that train
Had come for me, to take me home again!"
And I, forlorn, echo'd the hopeless wish.
We were so miserable, we did not try
Even to hide our tears:—and once, it happ'd,
Pinched with the wretched fare they served at school,
We hung about the platform, watching trains;
And gaping through at the refreshment room
With eager looks, a traveller noticed us,
Who, having less convention or a heart
Of kindlier feeling, pointed to some pies;
"Do boys still eat such things? Lay on, Macduff."

XII. *THE BIG SCHOOL.*

It is the silent irony of Heaven
That weak things should outlast the strong. Henceforth
With my eyes not my betters' those to come
Will visit here, where, round the panelled walls
On shields of zinc, lettered in red, are names
Of those who won distinction year by year:
Sawyer and Titherington, both scholars born,
The younger Smeaton, and good-natured Kent,
My seniors, these:—and the boy-abbot Bowers
In gorgeous vestments, with closed finger-tips,
Muttering Gregorians, bringing up the rear
In some procession of the unemployed
On Sunday evenings, down the chapel yard,
I well remember—Stewart too I knew,
And gentle Hallam and brave Howard Green,
And Wilson who could draw an angel down.

XIII. *THE LIBRARY.*

Five years I lived of fear that in me bred
Hatred of cruelty, hatred of vice,
And almost hatred of the human race;
Then all was changed, for thou wert by my side.
Do you remember the old oriel-room,
Our library, perched half-way up the tower?—
In such a turret Faustus might have toiled—
I seem to see you still, with slanting page,
Your dark head close against the casement pressed,
Reading away the winter afternoon,
Rapt with enchantment, flush'd with the fiery zest
That only youth can feel.
Ah, let me sing,
And cast this haunting sorrow from my heart;
For Charmides a thousand miles away
Sleeps by the stately river, where the white
Syringa-blossom droops above his breast.

XIV. *MAGDALEN MILL.*

The touch of time bequeathes a lovelier shade
To this famed walk of over-arching elms
That gird the meadow :—But the mill is gone—
Here have I idled many an hour away
Angling, or groping underneath the stones
For cray-fish : often the shy deer would come
To the park gate, and lift their lips against it
To take the bread we fished with :—One may see
The mill-dam yet : but the low westering sun
Shines on a stagnant pool, where once the stream
Poured from the pounding wheel in roaring foam.

So boyhood frets beneath constraint, nor dreams
How wistfully the light may some day fall
Upon the vacant stillnsss :—Yet, God knows,
I would not choose to live those hours again
Nor change what then I was with what I am.

XV. *MARSTON COPSE.*

I HEARD a nightingale in Marston Copse,
Beneath a saffron-leaf'd oak sapling, hidden
In the green thicket: as I nearer drew
I watched, and sheltered by the hedge I listened:
And listening, I seem'd to leave the earth
And soar into a finer element;
Dilating to some more celestial plane
Or dower'd with larger consciousness, I breathed
The spirit which fills the leaping heart of Spring:
And then, methought, I saw young Charmides;
Far on a flashing headland ringed with foam
I saw him standing, and behind him stood
His angel: oh, my throat was thick with joy!
To me they stretched their hands, and cried "Sing on:
O, hidden as the noon-day nightingale,
Darkness shall crown the fulness of thy song."

XVI. *AN ISLE OF SONG.*

But thou art gone: gone with the Autumn leaves:
As from the Autumn sky a falling star
May cast a thread of gold, so thou art gone:
And all is gone but thy dear memory
And faith unfathomed, and exalted song.
Death shall not brag he threw thee and rejoiced,
Oblivion's poppy shall not cover thee!—
Maugre the moth of chance, the rust of time,
The restless wave of mutability,
I'll build, like patient coral, stem by stem,
An Isle of Song:—and there the thrush shall sing
Sweeter than mortal on a bough of gold:
And in the shadow of the willow trees
We two, for ever young, will wander slow
Beside the river, where the sorrel gleams
At sunset, amid fields no scythe can reap.

INTERMEZZO.

ARCADES AMBO.

Sleeps Charmides beside the stream Cephissus
Under Athena's olive invulnerable?
Or by that grotto where great echoes linger
Of Theseus, and a Voice oracular
Summoned the blind old Seer?—
And Charmides, who gave me the narcissus,
Where Isis flows, beneath a white syringa
Sleeps by the Norman Tower on Iffley hill:
And o'er them both burns the same morning-star
Of beauty, like a tear.

PART II.

I. *INVOCATION.*

I TREAD the old enchanted fields: I pass
The space of years once more: once more I wave
My willow-wand, and call thee from the lake
Where thou art haply loitering, or liest
In pleasant meadow-land asleep, secure:—
Awake, and look upon thine earthly friend
Who loves thee yet, and would again behold
The phantom of the first he ever loved.

O, fairer than Narcissus at the fountain,
Eager as April with her tears and smiles,
Stand ever thus with Spring upon thy lips!
Nor from thy hand let fall the daffodil
That never fades,—dear vision of delight!
Dear Charmides, e'en as I gaze, the past
Returns, and passionate memory that plucks
The flower of beauty from the feet of death.

II. *MAGDALEN CHAPEL.*

The Carfax bell is tolling: the old town
Lies in a dull June haze: the cloisters,
Worn down by many a foot, are quiet now:
The pillars stand a-dreaming, though the hands
That fashioned them lie listless in the dust,
Hushed in forgetfulness: from point to point
The shadows creep: and that great judgment-scene
Burnt on the western window, is ablaze
With wrestling figures wrapt in bronzèd flame
Against the falling sun;
Come, Charmides,
Children are we of nature, not of wrath:
Under the trees between the winding streams,
Over the ferry, where the feathered grass
And flowers wave, and winged things exult,
There will we wander: till the long long day
Fades, and the sun sinks down to other lands.

III. *SELF-DEDICATION.*

And when the sun sinks down to other lands,
And where the may-fly fluttered, the white moth
Floats like a ghostly flower above the grass;
When in the scented twilight the bells ring
And the breath of night blows free—Oh, Charmides!
That lived once, and I loved once and for ever!
Death cannot conquer love. Still let us love,—
Not with the old half-torture, half-delight,
But with the new-fledged spirit of freedom:—
Hail!

If in celestial colonnade the moon
Silvers your lattice sleeping, or yonder star
Claim thee as denizen, where slumber never
Steals, nor sweet memory visits your dear eyes:
Yet, listen, while beneath the solemn gloom
And splendour of the summer night, I lift
My spirit in consecration, and in prayer.

IV. *A GARDEN AT DONNINGTON.*

Do you remember that wild tangled garden
Where once we lingered both of us together
An early summer afternoon alone?
The place that long had stood untenanted
Echo'd and echo'd to your mirthful laugh
As we explored the house from room to room
Or leaned upon the little balcony
That hung above th' unweeded flower-beds, filled
With budding columbine:—
And here we talked
Of your new home and all our boyish hopes,
Of what the hidden years might have in store
For both of us, and of the dreams we shared:—
At last descending, yielding to a whim,
Or moved by sudden prescience of thy doom
Thou didst stoop down and pick a white narcissus;
Half-sad, half-playful—adding words like these—

V. *A NARCISSUS.*

'Receive this flower, and keep it for my sake:
So, in the years to come, if luck is mine
And you should meet misfortune:—if you wish
Send me this token, and I vow:'—(he kissed it)—
'I will be true, if you are true to me.'
And then, amid the swaying orchard-grass,
His cheek irradiate with the rosy glow
Of sunset, to the hum of quivering gnat:
Continued: "and if aught should come between
To mar our friendship; or if untimely change
Should steal you from me, while I yet survive:
Wait patiently for me beyond the river,
And when I pass, pick me the star of flowers,
So shall we know each other, and rejoice."
And, when at last we rose, the trees were dark,
And the bat circled in the garden gloom.

VI. *WYTHAM WOODS.*

Do you remember once, past Osney town,
Leaving the dusty seven-bridge road, we turned
Our steps to Wytham woods?—
That happy day
We picnic'd underneath a tree, and watched
The butterflies: some flutter'd in the grass
Blue as the sky, or white as summer cloud:
Others in mazy rings from briar to briar
Went eddying down the edges of the wood,
Like flying flowers, among the saffron-leafed
Oak-saplings flitting: and one, all peacock-eyed,
Upon the apex of a lilac thistle
Settled, and sunn'd her damask-dreaming wings.—
Not lovelier were thy flowers, O Proserpine
Of Sicily: and these melodious woods
And grassy slopes, no less than Enna's vale
Sacred to thee, are haunted evermore.

VII. *PARSONS' PLEASURE.*

Do you remember that straight gravel-walk
Planted with may-trees, leading to the bridge,
With sunny palisade? On summer morns,
When we passed down to bathe, what scented showers
Of may-bloom like confetti strewed our path;
The crimson drift of summer's carnival!—
Do you remember the old willow-stump?
And how you swam (although I warned you back)
Far out to gather the first water-lilies?
I seem to see you still, waving the buds
Above the stream, and toiling with one hand!
Ah, dear drenched head, dear laughter-flashing eyes,
How glad were you to grasp the steps at last!—
And I too swim far out to gather flowers,
And with one hand I toil, that I may hold
These buds of song above the stream of Death.

VIII. *GODSTOW.*

And once, in strawberry time, we rowed together
To many-gated Godstow, where the stream
Splits, and upon a tongue of land there stands
An inn with willow-bowers :—it is a spot
Where still the genius of Old Merry England
Lingers : and gently flowed the silver Thames
Beside the garden, while we fed the fish.
There, in the twilight to the trellised roses
We sang the ballad of fair Rosamund :
And drifting homeward down the stream, we saw
Above the ruined Nunnery where she sleeps
A star ; and from the reeds a mournful gust
Whispered and rippled round the shallow prow
Leaving a tragic silence :—at that moment
The mighty mother touched me, and I felt
The first strong throb of that which rules me still.

IX. *WORCESTER GARDENS.*

Do you remember once, in Worcester Garden,
We heard *The Tempest* played beneath the trees?—
'Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again:'
These were the lines that fell like shooting stars
Out of the summer heaven, while the leaves
Murmured about us both.
To-day I passed,
And saw the tree-tops touched with autumn gold,
Thirty years after: it was but a glimpse
Caught from a moving window; yet I felt
(While through the smoke and uproar onward hurled)
Heart-shaken, like old Prosper in his cell.

X. *MAY MORNING.*

Do you remember how, upon May-morning
We climbed the Tower?—first, the broad wooden
flights
And then the spiral steps; and last the ladder
That led us out into the welcome air?
Then might you see the choir in full array
Bare-headed turn towards that point of heaven
Whence light appears: and when the clock had told
The same hour as the fingers of one hand,
A silence fell upon the listening throng
And on the upturned faces of the crowd
Below: a moment's hush:—and then the strains
'*Te Deum Patrem Colimus*' began,
Our Royal Founder's hymn.
O Towers of Death,
Have ye no voices that salute the May?
Are there no angels in the opening East
To comfort us who listen and look up?

XI. *MOZART'S REQUIEM.*

The prelude of a thousand organ-pipes
In diapason pealed the approach of Doom;
And thrice, while loud th' archangel trumpet rang,
Majestic voices thunder'd '*Rex!*' and lo!
The King of Kings and Lord of Lords passed by
Riding in triumph upon the clouds of heaven:—
Then '*Salva me fons pietatis*' fell
Soft as a trembling feather of the Dove
Beneath whose wings, brooding outstretched, are heard
Celestial voices by the cedar-trees
Of Paradise, lovelier than Lebanon,
Singing of Peace, where Love and Peace abide:
And when those strains had ceased,—those solemn strains—
I looked at Charmides; and through the veil
Of his bright eyes, suffused with tears, I saw
The '*Salva me*' of love's apocalypse.

XII. *EASTER MORNING.*

Do you remember how on Easter Day
We used to sing the resurrection hymn
Outside the old Dean's rooms? Four boys together
We stood upon the darkling staircase, singing
As dawn was breaking o'er the tranquil towers.
And when we ceased, and heard his grave salute
'*Surrexit Pastor, benedicite,*
Laudate pueri, surrexit Pastor.'
How sweet the low and measured Latin fell
From his kind lips, while from a silver tray
He doled us, each in turn, an Easter gift!
And not ungrateful, when the Spring returned,
We gathered handfuls of fritillaries
(Snake's-head we called them) from the island meadow,
And shyly laying them outside his doors,
Slipped down the oaken stair, nor stayed for thanks.

XIII. *MADRIGALS.*

In Autumn, when the first dead chestnut-leaf
Drops through the stillness like an outspread hand,
We used to gather in the spacious hall
To sing true English music;—madrigals
In praise of *Oriana*, or quaint glees
Of '*Shepherds running up apace the mountain*'!
Do you remember him who held the wand
In his strong fingers, and the shaking tuft
Of hair that boded storm? And after supper,
We used to gather round the old Dean's chair
Beside the wood-fire, while he read aloud.
How the long portraits on the lofty wall
Stared down upon us listening to the tale
Of Flodden or Drumossie!—The spectral past
Weighed on my spirit: but when I looked at you
Joy in my bosom blossomed like the rose.

XIV. *CHRISTMAS EVE.*

Do you remember how, upon the eve
Of the Nativity, it was our wont
To keep the vigil of the King of Peace?
Bright glowed the lighted hall, and every guest
Wore the glad season's garland of good-will,
And on the dais towered the tinselled tree:
But could I choose, and tell what touched me most
Of all the music of that night of song,
'Twould be the Suabian melody divine
In Dulci Jubilo:—a strain so pure
That e'en the memory of that sweet carol
Ringing amid the rafters, when the snow
Is falling, and the hour draws on to twelve,
Brings tears into my eyes: This Christmas Eve,
Love, though I cannot hear thee, thou art singing
Cælorum Cantica—Oh that we were there.

XV. *GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.*

'GLORY to God' the Italian canon rose
In intricate iteration, as of old,
Amid the scarlet conclave, and the pomp
At Rome, the Angel message: 'Peace on earth,
Goodwill to men':—Then, when the midnight hour
In solemn hush awaited, chimed and struck:
Bells in the belfry rang 'Noel, Noel,'
And all the ten bells clashed, until the tower
Rocked as in exultation: and afar
Over the starlit city dome and spire
Answer'd the challenge, echoing back their praise.

Time cannot steal the wonder from the sky
Nor fret the white robe of Emmanuel:
Still o'er His cradle hangs the guiding star;
And round His head, while bending Magi kneel,
The Dove of Peace celestial glory sheds.

XVI. *ALMA MATER.*

Illustrious Mother, patroness of the poor!
Me, as a child, mid echoing cloisters old,
Thou in thy love didst nurture and instruct;
And Charmides, is he not with thee still?
Through all the generations for to come
Still with thee, shall the music of thy bells
And murmuring rivers haunt his hill of rest.

Ah, famous city, city of my soul,
Let me but touch thy stones, and say farewell!—
O Mother, there is virtue in thy touch:—
I see thee still, inspired with patient thought,
Musing upon the mystery of the world;
And those gray towers in autumn's evening hush
Still draw us back as pilgrims to thy shrine
With something of a mother's wistfulness
Remembering hopes which Time has not fulfilled.

PART III.

I. *NEW MAGDALEN BRIDGE.*

And after many days I came again
And wandered by the long familiar walls,
A stranger, and unknown. Many the year
Since first I stood upon this bridge, and heard
The light bell ring for evening prayer; and now
Another generation with other ways
Passes me unconcerned: and all around
The elm-trees shed in showers their sallow leaves.
Can I, whose heart throbs as a homeless child's,
I, to whom life looms yet so wonder-strange,
Be growing old?—Then come, dear Charmides,
Swan of my soul, begin the dying strain!
"Why dost thou heed the falling leaf, or reck
The ruined years behind thee? Love is youth:"
Thy voice canorous through the darkness calls,
And flying homeward through the mist, I sing.

II. *A RETROSPECT.*

Alas! the rearward of my life lies dim
As a great tract of sand washed clean by tide
Of every childish castle, and there gleams
Only the distance traversed; every print
And trace of all I traversed once is gone:
Only some stubborn rock or ribbed wreck
Breaks the gaunt landscape, while the wistful moon
Whose light is memory, crescent no more,
Sheds a wan splendour on the lessening waste:
For, in the midnight, knells upon mine ear
The bitter thunder of the flowing tide
Buffeting and booming round the outward reef:
Remorseless billows of oblivion
Roll in: and shallowing as they shoreward roll,
Bursting in layers of foam, shoot out their tongues,
And hiss in tremulous silver to my feet.

III. *THE ESSENTIAL SELF.*

Once, in the morning-tide of life and love
When every leaf and blade distilled a pearl
Of hope, and every passing shower displayed
A bow of promise, and the world was bright:—
I took no heed of Nature's ministries,
But like a child accepted all she gave
In happy heedlessness: but now I know
That every oak-tree is an oracle.
There comes an hour when each of us must say;
'Something is taken time will not recall,
Something is added which was not of old.'
And yet love's hope brooks no denial: beneath
The denudation of the stormy years,
Deep down th' essential self remains unchanged:
So in the seraph lives the friend I loved
As in the silent man the boy survives.

IV. *SELF-CONTROL.*

Could that which burns within her breast leap forth
The earth would long ago have been consumed;
E'en so my love lives on and is not spent,
E'en so the fire burns deep, and I am dumb:
Only, perchance, on some still afternoon
When the soft grays of autumn wake regret,
The depths of memory shudder, and cast forth
A short volcanic shower of sudden song
Flashing with lava and dust of whirling dreams,
Uprushing streams of joy, and blasts of hell;—
And then, as suddenly, the fierce impulse fails.
More often, in the long warm winter nights,
When the fire sinks, and through the gaping grate
The glimmering ashes quiver into gloom,
In stoical submission, like a stone
I sit unmoved: I sit and muse alone.

V. *THE WELLS OF SLEEP.*

THEN, in the shadow of the cave of sleep,
Motionless by the brink where fern-seed grows,
Gazing into those cold clear depths, I see
Wonderful shapes: and wandering sounds, the soul
Of music yet unborn, I hear: and forms
Visit me in my dream, with faces hidden,
And hands that beckon as they fade from sight.

Ancient as sorrow, young as new-born love,
'Tis beauty that enthralls, undying beauty,
The beauty of the dead, that fills my heart
With tears, I know not wherefore, till with tears
Mine eyes o'erflow.
The trivial things of life
Bring back self-consciousness: and then we gaze
Vainly in beauty's fountain: soon, too soon
Care, like quicksilver, dulls the crystal depths
Till they reflect no image but our own.

VI. *THE FELLOWS' BRIDGE.*

City of bridges—none hast thou like this;
For this, although I loved it as a boy,
Yet have I never crossed: For in the midst
There stands a wooden wicket, and above it
A grim *cheval de frise.*
So, in my dreams,
When, Mirza-like, I tread the bridge of life,
I reach a guarded door I cannot climb:—
But I am well content to linger here
And watch the river, leaning on the rail,
And feel at least withdrawn if not secure:—
Nay, if some favoured hand that holds the key
Should open, and give me liberty to pass,
Do I not know that all which lies concealed
Is kin to that which I can plainly see?—
To look once more upon the things we love
Is better than to crane at things beyond.

VII. *DANTE AND BROWNING.*

O Dante, is it true these streets have felt
The feet that trod Inferno?
In these streets
I saw the last great heir of English song
Whom Venice, scene of thy vain pilgrimage,
Took,—but his heart still sleeps where thou wast born—
And this gray city knew the first, the last,
And still she dreams in silence: oh, if her walls
Could echo with the accents of the dead,
Or if her stones could 'blossom in the dust'
And tell of all the mighty who have trod them,
What city could a chronicle unfold
More ancient, more august? They are in peace.
Still from the past their bidding voices hail us:
'The great inheritance which once was ours
Is yours to-day. To-morrow and to-morrow
Let the traditions deepen and endure.'

VIII. *SEDBERGH.*

AGAIN the cuckoo calls, the dog-rose blooms,
And through the ghyll the clear-voiced rivulet falls
Where fern and foxglove lean above the Force,
And o'er the mimulus-bells and globe-flowers drooping
The bees still murmur, and the ousel sings.—
Still, in this dingle spread the same dark boughs
And every larch is fledged with lighter green,
Only the cankered fir-cone at my feet
Whispers of happier summers that have fled.

Blow, vernal airs, breathe o'er my brow love's secret,
Mock me not thus with thy divine renewal,
Dear earth, but tell me, he too will return:
Not as of old in frail and fleeting vesture,
Garment of heaviness and grace that fades!
Bnt, in a world unfading, in His Image
Shall we not waken, and be satisfied?

IX. *INSPIRATION.*

Come, welcome Spring! a wave of ecstasy
Sweeps through my frame, and every fibre thrills:
My heart, my brain, my senses,—all are bathed
In beauty, and to music every impulse
And step, and gesture, undivided moves;
Fain would I sing, but only broken notes
Fall from my lips: a flood of happiness
O'erwhelms me, wandering through the woods alone:
Yon white acacia leaning over the pool
Sways not her drooping blossom in the breeze
With purer joy than I my thoughts unfold:
The budding lilies floating in mid-stream
Are not more lovely than the hopes which lie
Half-opened in my bosom: and all my heart
Unutterably throbs—a sunlit heaven
Of hidden stars—waiting for night to come.

X. *GARDE-JOYEUSE OF YOUTH.*

As some poor exile pushes from the shore
Alone at twilight, leaving all he loves,
I float along the quickening stream of years;
Great trees bend o'er me, and the night wind blows:
From the dense forest comes the distant roar
Of hunger, or anon some desperate cry
Of pain and combat; or, some monstrous snake
Gapes, swaying from the poisonous bough, and darts
A flickering tongue at me: or mid the reeds
Glitters the mail of some grim crocodile
Floating beside the ford:—
And at my back
Black thunder broods:—O fading towers of youth
Whose gates are locked in everlasting night,
Farewell!—Death holds the key: I am driven forth,
A brother to the disinherited
And all whose Aiden is the evening star.

XI. *THE KEYSTONE.*

Death is the keystone of the vital arch
That spans the flood of mutability;
It is an arch based on the two unknowns,
The whence, the whither: and death renders firm
Or proves unstable all life's superstructure:—
But Faith's a rainbow sprung of light divine
Falling on human tears, and standing bright
Against the onset of renewing storms.
O that my Art could gather in one crown
The pearls that glitter'd on love's April lyre
Of early promise: O that I might sweep
The chords that, stretched across the hollow shell
Of heaven, awake celestial harmonies,
So that the laverock mid the falling rain
Carols more blithely, and the sower's hand
With happier confidence scatters good seed.

XII. *HESPER-PHOSPHOR.*

Hush'd in the glimmering depth of day's adieu
Hesperus glows above the fallen sun:
And, when the constellated hosts have wheel'd
And set, and the great year has run its course,
The same star is the herald of the dawn:—

Thou wert the planet of my waking soul,
Hesper of life's long night:—albeit now
A thousand others shine, and thou art gone;
Yet, when the silence deepens, and the breeze
Of morning stirs,—O Day-spring from on high!—
Will not that star which rose upon earth's night
Herald the splendour of the rising sun?
Wilt thou not then return?—I live in faith
That I shall see thee then, first, as of old;
Though thou art hidden in the depths of heaven,
And I, a pilgrim in a world of pain.

XIII. *MAN THE COLOSSUS.*

Imagination brooding o'er mankind
Conceives the figure of the human race
As a Colossus, bearing in himself
Both that which was, and is; his feet are formed
Of servile elements; and, cell by cell,
The higher and the higher:—but one whole,
From head to heel one huge imperfect whole,—
Whereof we all are conscious atomies;
And as he strides the battle-plain, or groans
Breasting the mount of vision; from his pores
The souls of men distil like drops of sweat;
And those sad eyes where saints and poets watch
Are raised in deep humility to heaven;
And from those lips where prophets sit enthroned
There bursts a cry: 'We know not thy design
O Father, but we feel that all are One.'

XIV. *ALPHA AND OMEGA.*

Ere first enormous Andes raised his head
Cleaving the swollen cloud-rack with his snows;
When cataracts, like the strings of one great lyre,
Thunder'd the bridal hymn of earth and sun;
Ere first the morning-star—a stripling herald—
Peeped through the chambers of the curtain'd East
On tiptoe, for his coming:—ere first the god
Sprang glorious on the golden mountain-peak
And watched the earth her virgin mists unveil;
Love was, dear Charmides:—
And when the moon
In some neglected corner of the sky
Ekes out her scanty pittance from the sun;
When, mid her peers, this perish'd earth shall roll
Cold as a snowball, frozen and deform:
Still shall Love triumph, still shall Love redeem us,
Dear Charmides,—for Love is Lord of all.

XV. *SUNSET AT SARE*

Long gaps of lingering splendour—but no sun—
Now from the heights the hieratic tints
Fade slowly, like the fervour from life's dream:
And every valley veiled in violet bloom
Lies hushed; till lo, from out her vestal shrine—
Heaven's inmost penetralia of peace—
Upon the bosom of maternal night
Passionless Hesper, like a kneeling child,
Glimmers: and soft as dew, the far off hills
Drop down divine nostalgia on my soul
That homeward turns at last.
Dear Charmides,
Still be thou near me, wheresoe'er I walk,
The motive and the charm of solitude:
Close as a shadow let thy memory cling
And deepen round me; till the shadows break
And on the golden bough the thrush begins.

XVI. *OXFORD.*

Upon a hill I stood, and far below
Lay the loved city in a silver haze:
Mine eyes were quick with tears: she lay so fair,
So passionless, so sad.
'Twas here our fathers
Drained the waste fen, and with prophetic eye
Divined a refuge for the soul, and planned
A green oasis severed from the waste,
Where each, in cloistered calm and leisure shade,
Might learn of wisdom in the lap of peace.
Slowly she grew in unobtrusive grace
Generous in bounty as in beauty first:
As showers, as showers of scarlet leaves in autumn,
The generations scatter: she remains
Like Niobe, surviving all her sons:—
Me too, O Mother, did the Sungod's arrow
Winged with Uranian splendour pierce;—Farewell.

TO THE
MORNING THRUSH.

Epilogue.

LOVER of lawns and garden solitudes!
Ere sunlight chase the lingering stars away
Again thou pourest forth melodious floods
Of rapture from the flowering chestnut-spray:
And, as I listen, and the dawn-wind blows,
I seem to wander, hand in hand, among
The lilies where the living water flows,
With beauty and with love for ever young.

Rich as Arabian clouds that damascene
The deep at sunrise:—in my reverie
The dreaming heaven of all that might have been
Bursts into splendour like a sunlit sea;
And, at thy voice,—O Love in Paradise!
I see afar the secret dwelling-place,
Where, like the mirror'd cloud, earth's memories
Shall melt into the morning of thy face.

O heart of boyhood,—happy, happy song
Waking celestial echoes in my heart!
Minstrel of youth that suffers and is strong,
Of love that cannot be destroyed, thou art:—
Priest at thine altar standing rapt beneath
The efflorescent boughs like censers swinging,
Sing me thine orison:—the mist of death
Is changed to incense, while I hear thee singing.

SIX SONNETS.

THE SHELLEY MEMORIAL.

(At University College, Oxford.)

Above him hangs a sapphire-coloured dome
Superb with stars: but through the rifted floor
Breaks, like eternity—his metaphor—
The light beyond. We envy not dead Rome
His little dust: for here—by fire and foam
Twice purged from every stain of mortal wrong,—
Th' imperishable heart of passionate song
Even thy heart, O Shelley, may find a home!

Here, through the ages, shall thy shrine be shown;
Here, vindicated, on thy pyre sublime
Lifted above the flood and flame of time,
The world shall pay thee homage, and shall own
More strong than privilege and power and pride,
Genius—of all her martyrs justified.

AN OAK NEAR OXFORD.

Lo !—like a king in Thule with his thegns,—
Quaffing the goblet of the golden sun
This glorious oak, when summer has begun,
Drinks in fresh vigour through his leafy veins
Until, arrayed in royal robes, he reigns :
A thousand years he sees, from his green throne,
The goblet sink into the deep unknown ;
While he, earth's mightiest, unremoved remains.

Ah, as he watches the great sun go down
Has he no dim prevision of that part
In Time's rude drama even oaks must play ?
When storm and tempest sweep his frenzied crown
He too shall learn though late and stubborn of heart,
' Earth's mightiest, fallen, have no second day.'

THE WEIR.

It seems indeed a vision desolate
When, on some autumn eve, the breezes shrill
Stripping the willow-trees above the mill,
Dead leaves drift downward to the water-gate,
Where, like the ghosts in Dante's dream, they wait
Chafing to pass:—so, by a Higher Will
Toward a barrier as inexorable
We too like leaves are drifting, small and great.

Yet, though our morn be often hidd'n in haze,
Our evening blotted with a blinding mist,
The power of man is in his upward gaze:
Since God has mingled, as He only can,
Both frailty and fortitude in man,
'Tis man's to be resigned—and yet, persist.

FROM THE PARKS.

WHILE from this bench I watch the winding Cher
Slow as a tortoise creep from shade to shade,
How trivial seem the changes Time has made!
Still looms the Dome of Wisdom from afar,
Still gleams the lily like an evening star!
And sooner shall e'en Wisdom's King, arrayed
In all his glory, from remembrance fade
Than youth's white bud of glimmering nenuphar.

Down in yon deepening bend I learnt to swim:
Beneath these drooping boughs I walked with him
Whom death has parted from me, like a dream;
And here it was I found my willow-wand:
How beautiful—across the narrow stream—
Shines the red sorrel in the fields beyond!

IN THE BOTANIC GARDEN.

(After the Oxford Pageant, July 2nd, 1907.)

O WHAT an Iliad of hopes and fears
More fierce than any fought with spear and lance,—
O what an Odyssey of sheer romance
My own past life, in retrospect, appears!
Now, as the tumult ebbs and the air clears,
I see myself—no thrall of Fate or Chance—
But girt around in every circumstance
As any god-led hero of ancient years.

Full thirty times into this placid stream
These drooping boughs have shed their prickly store,
Since first I dreamed here of the days to come:—
What though I cannot tell what measure more
May be assigned me—these still moments seem
To whisper that I am not far from home.

AFTER CHARMIDES.

Who in his nobler moments would deny
The splendour of life?—and if I too have gained
Power through affliction, and by faith maintained
My birthright, not yet sold for pottage; why
May I not say it? Death is victory—
Though on this pastoral slope I might have reigned,
My heart is fixed with hope and love unfeigned
To tread the mount of vision ere I die.

Humility is life's heroic prize,—
Unfaltering faith in God is man's great need,—
O that my words might be as winged seed—
For slender is the harvest of the wise,
And many whom the world has honoured least
Shall sit exalted at the heavenly feast.

DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA.

I.

(THE FRIAR).

Pacing in silence the gray moonlit street
A phantom moved beside me with bare feet:
"Brother," he whispered, "from Alverna's woods,
And Casentino's mountain solitudes,
A nameless few, St. Francis sent us forth:
Here, for the love of God, in this bleak North
We served among the outcast and the sick—
Sons of St. Francis and St. Dominic:—
O the lost legions of the Lord of Hosts!
Doth not the night lead forth their cowléd ghosts?
Do not their shadows beckon and waylay
The careless footsteps of a later day,
And daunt the sons of Tumult ere they tread
Amid the dreaming cloisters of the dead?
Forget us not, O brother, for by God's grace
We were the nursing-fathers of this place:
What though to-day her seats of power and pride
Stretch as lign-aloes by the water-side,—

Not for themselves did your forefathers found
These homes of learning upon hallowed ground;
Not for the rich alone did Princes raise
Her walls of wisdom, and her gates of praise.

"What does this city dream of, as she stands,
Save of the city that is not made with hands?
Or is it moonlight only that so steeps
In peace her groves and gardens, as she sleeps?
What are her towers, her temples, and her dome,
But shadows of the better things to come?
Is there no presage in her Virgin spire
Sheathed in white armour of celestial fire?
No menace in those statues smouldering there
Lifted on lonely pinnacles of prayer?
Mute witnesses of human woe and wrong
From age to age their vigil they prolong:
Hear they no whisper from the starry height?
O patient watchmen of the passing night
Are ye not waiting for the promised end?—
Then come, Lord Jesus—O that Thou would'st rend
The heavens, and in majesty descend
With a loud shout; with lifted trumpet blown,
With thousands and ten thousands round thy throne

Then, at the cry 'Behold, the Bridegroom comes!'
The dead shall hear His voice, and leave their tombs:
Then shall His angels, speeding through the skies,
Thrust in the sickle for that dread assize,
And gather first for fire the worthless tares:
And the Sons of God, upon the golden stairs
Of heaven, shall hymn the Spirit and the Bride.

Then shall they cry to the mountains 'Hide, O hide!'
And kings shall skip like conies to the rocks:
And as a shepherd separates his flocks
Upon His right hand shall He set His sheep,
And many shall rejoice, and many weep:—
Ah, *Jesu pie*, Judge of quick and dead,
Ne, ne me perdas illa die,"—said
The phantom at my side, and turned and fled.

II.

(THE SAINT).

THEN, o'er my soul another spell was cast:
I heard a second voice speak from the past.

"O thou who gazest on St. Mary's fane,
I was the humblest scholar in her train;
Yet, me she lifted from my low estate
To sit with kings, and to rebuke the great:
Alas,—the higher I was raised, the less
Did I the riches of her poor possess,
Until, once more, from worldly grandeur shrunk,
Cast forth contemned, I knelt, a simple monk.
Then, as the fire of memory in me burned,
A sweetness, like the breath of May, returned—
O'er me again the joy of knighthood burst
And all the boyish vision, when the first
Bright ray of Beauty shone upon my path:—
Such grief had I as every exile hath;
Yet, oft I seemed, at Compline or at None,
To hear the merry bells of Abingdon
And live again that morn I came to thee,
O Virgin-Mother, in my poverty:

For, here it was I vowed myself thy knight
And with exchange of rings my troth did plight
To her who is the Lady of all Grace:
Surely her Peace doth rest upon this place.

What though the sword of grief, O Love Divine,
The sword that pierced thy heart, hath piercéd mine,
Yet even grief grows beautiful, being old,
And all our sorrow, as a tale, is told:—
O'er Roncesvalles, green with April corn,
Still rings the blast of dying Roland's horn:
Time hides the rest:—to later ages float
Of things disastrous done in days remote
Only the echoes of some high chivalric note:—

* * * *

Over a ruined realm, the prostrate cross,
Time strews her flowers, and steals with trembling moss:—
What though her Image in the dusty niche
Shall wear no more the ring of Edmund Rich:
Take me, O dreaming city, and whisper thus:
'Thou art made one imperishably with us;
Though in the sight of men they seem to fail
The saints shall triumph, and the cross prevail.'"

ODE AND PALINODE.

I.

HUSHED is the leafless glade,
Silent the tower,
Silent the colonnade
Where, as a boy, I played:
Standing alone
Here at the midnight hour
I see again
The weather'd stone,
The moonlit pane,
The withered creeper swaying in the breeze:
The glimmering lattices
That once glowed bright with festal cheer,
How blind and blanch'd they peer!

Where hast thou fled,
O spirit of boyhood, now?
Around my lonely brow
Time only wreathes

A garland of gray hairs,
And to my earnest prayers
Deigns no reply :—
Desolate Nature breathes
A wintry sigh,
Saying : " Thou, too, shalt die
Worn down with cares
Even as those who are dead."

II.

Many a summer day
I have loitered here
Feeding the fallow deer:
Many a morn in May
I have glanced up from my books
Envying the noisy rooks
Their liberty and strife:
Or, drifting in my boat
Under the sunlit elms,
Dreaming of life,
The same rich note
Has mingled with my dream:—
Ah, how it overwhelms!
So soon the stream
Bears us away.

Who can unravel how
The caul of care doth grow
O'er him who gropes in the gloom,
Penn'd in life's narrow room

Panting for light and breath
And birth,
To burst from this blind earth
Whose door is death ?

Where hast thou fled,
O spirit of boyhood ? Lo !
The fields are mute with frost,
And ghosts of long ago,
The faces that I know,
The friends that I have lost,
Flit past, like phantom all,
Saying : " Thou, too, shalt go
Beyond recall.
Even as we who are dead."

III.

And yet, and yet,
What have I to regret?
Rather, deep gratitude
Is mine for gifts so good:
The Faith time cannot tame
Burns with as bright a flame,
And Hope that looks ahead is still the same:

I mourn not for the days
That can return no more,
But with undaunted gaze
And steadfast heart
I move to that dark door
That stands apart
But does not turn both ways.

IV.

O STRANGE,—and swift as strange—
Will be the welcome change
From arctic to Arcadian weather!
There, in the tremulous haze
All creatures sing together
Their hymn of praise:
And in the fields
Celestial daisies lift their Spartan shields
Saluting the great sun:
The New Life has begun!
Round the eaves
The swallows rush,
And in the dewy laurel leaves
Pipes as of old the perfect thrush:
The naked briar
Bursts into bud,
And, like a bush of fire
A thousand blossoms flood
The shimmering air with scent:
Dreamy bewilderment

And langour exquisite
Enthrall me; larks aloft
Drop notes like bubbling nectar, pure
As dew: and in the distance, soft
The cuckoo calls me to the fields of light:—
To him who can endure
Unto the end,
To all the simple-hearted
Death is a friend:
When, from the body parted
Th' enfranchised spirit waits
At heaven's gates,
Such music fills the air;
And while he lingers there
The loved ones come
To lead him home.

AUTUMN IN WADHAM GARDEN.

Her passing seems to me more fair
Than all the pride of summer's hour:
Now, while the half-transfigured air
Flings splendour on the seeding flower

That only struggles not to die:—
So, mute with meaning unexpressed,
So, hushed for some great agony
This garden still awaits a guest.

Here, on some spirit drawn apart
Shall fall her mantle and her flame
To serve with undivided heart
A bride more beautiful than fame:

Stooping from heaven with a smile
Shall he behold her, and obey:—
Some Aidan of a sunnier isle,
Some Francis of a simpler day.

OXFORD AT NIGHT.

Her towers in heavenly splendour soar
And smoulder to the starlit air,
As though her beauty, slumbering, wore
The robe Immortals wear.

It is not might of armoured fleets
Nor power of sword she deems most dear,
Soldier and sailor in her streets
Are guests and strangers here.

But, is there one like him who came
Bare-footed to St. Mary's Porch?
It is for him she guards her flame
And holds the sacred torch.

Austere she stood in ancient times,
A refuge for the pure in heart,
And still the music of her chimes
Peals from a world apart.

And when we hear those cloister'd bells
  After long years, or absence long,
With what high hopes and proud farewells
    Their haunting echoes throng!

Until it seems as if she brings
  (To mock the pride of lonely men),
Only the tears of mortal things
    That cloud our mortal ken.

Yet, through her *silence* breathes a spell
  Of deeper import, wider range,
That speaks of things invisible
    And charms through every change.

Still, o'er the waste of Time's decay,
  Dove-like she broods with dreaming wing,
Still, fluttering at her windows grey,
    Brings back the pledge of Spring.

THE LEAVES OF SPRING.

HERE—where the moonbeam glistens cold and calm
On the bare garden, the low cloister arch :—
Soon will the golden-tassel'd willow-palm
Shimmer with bees beneath the blue of March.

The redbreast, eyeing where the gardener digs,
Wears not a mantle from so rich a loom
As yonder shrub, when her thick leafless twigs
Are clothed in clustering cusps of crimson bloom.

Here will the flowering almond waste away
Almost before the thrush has learnt to sing,
Here will the mulberry grudge to fickle May
The last and loveliest of the leaves of Spring.

ST. MARY'S PORCH.

Still twine my thoughts round Love and Youth's
twin torch
Close as the clinging creepers that festoon
The spiral pillars of St. Mary's Porch
In the deep shadow, 'neath a wintry moon.

Have I not served—though sorrow was my lot—
And woo'd thee long?—O Love, where'er I tread,
I seem to hear in each remembered spot
The voice of Rachel weeping for her dead.

O City of the Past—would, as of old,
That, like the Son of Beor, in a trance
Falling, with open eyes, I might behold
The generations with a Seer's glance.

The Angel, who hath fed me all my days
And hath redeemed me from a thousand ills,
Bless them on whom mine eyes shall never gaze,
And lift them to the everlasting hills.

Oft as the welcome of the Christmas bells
Shall break the silence of the moonlit street,
Let my song echo: 'Fear not earth's farewells,
Lean on thy staff, and gather up thy feet.'

As dying Israel bade them bear his bones
Back to the sacred land where Rachel died,
So shall ye lay my dust beneath these stones
And let me slumber by *the loved hill side.*

DOUBLE SONNET.

(Suggested by the Ter-centenary of Milton.)

I.

I HAVE not wandered forty years and more
In this wide wilderness of life for nought;
It is not for a shadow I have fought,
It is not empty silence I implore:
But, drawing closer to death's threshing-floor
I feel that I have been divinely taught,
I feel that I shall find what I have sought,
And knocking—Love will open me a door.

I have not lain amid the reeds and lilies
Nor played the satyr to the pipes of Pan,
Nor was I dower'd like that seraphic man
Who sang of Eden and of outcast Eve—
The wrath of some celestial Achilles
Whom all admire, but in whom none believe!

II.

O STRONG as Samson, blind as Scio's bard!
Sun-smitten eagle of the sacred hill
Soaring alone and unapproachable!—
My dreaming eyes are fixed on Love's regard:
Like her who broke the box of pistic nard
Over her Master as He sat at meat;
While others murmur'd—she, at Love's own feet
Won by devotion her unique reward.

The triumph is not always to the swift,
Nor to the strong; there is an inner soul
Of vision which is hidden from the wise:
But it was ever the world's common drift
To make My House a house of merchandise
And shout Hozanna—to the ass's foal.

VALEDICTORY.

The blackbird with his crocus-coloured bill
Pipes from a woolly spray of willow-palm;
Upon the fading double daffodil
A glory falls:—How exquisitely calm
The air is in my April garden now,
While from the shower-drenched border steals the balm
Of wall-flower; and the windless heavens glow
More golden than the sun-kissed apricot:
And yonder cowslip-cloudlet seems to know
The way they went, and say, 'Forget them not:'—
For a little while this pillory of the flesh
Seems to be lifted, and my garden-plot
Transfigured shines so dewy-sweet and fresh,
The flowers seem shadows of celestial things;
And I, escaped from earth's entangling mesh
Sing, happy as the bird that trusts his wings!

Far off I hear the village vesper bell:
To-night is Easter Eve that ever brings

Faith which transcends the anguish of farewell:—
Two have I loved, and both have passed from sight,
And both are with me now, invisible,
Walking upon my left hand and and my right;
Although my ears are dull, and I am blind,
I feel that they are near me now to-night;
And they have come, I doubt not, to remind
My drooping heart of that not distant day
When I too shall have cast my cloak behind:
Dear children of the Sun, can ye not stay
A little longer?—Till my task is done
(Ye whisper) that I have but to obey
And to endure:—
Ah! whither have ye flown?
Angels of twilight!—leave me not so soon.

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